

## PREFACE

The Slavic Research Center (SRC) of Hokkaido University held an International Symposium, entitled “Siberia and the Russian Far East in the 21st Century: Partners in the ‘Community of Asia’,” at Sapporo, Japan, on July 14-16, 2004. The Symposium was mainly funded by a special scientific research grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education’s 21st Century “Center of Excellence” program (Making a Discipline of Slavic Eurasian Studies: 2003-2008, Project Leader Ieda Osamu) and partly assisted by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (Russo-Chinese Cooperation and Its Implication for Eurasian Security in the Post-Cold War Period: 2003-2006, Project Leader Iwashita Akihiro).

The SRC invited some of the leading Russian experts from Siberia and the Far East and provided a discussion forum between them and other top specialists from Korea, China, the US and Japan. Twenty presenters participated, including seven from Russia, two from Korea, two from China and three from the US. The Symposium was also organized to consider the diversities within the countries of the participants. The Russian delegation consisted of participants from Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok and Sakhalin. The two Chinese presenters from Harbin and Beijing, and a discussant from Shanghai

also participated. The SRC invited Korean specialists from the UK and Singapore as well.

The Symposium started with its opening speeches: Valerii Kuleshov's "Economic Transformations of Siberia and the Russian Far East in the Coming Decades of the 21st Century" and Gilbert Rozman's "Sino-Japanese Competition over the Russian Far East: Is the Oil Pipeline Only a Starting Point?" The sessions of the Symposium covered discussions on regional economic integration, international relations, energy cooperation, fisheries, literature, history and others. The Symposium aimed to verify the possibility of Siberia and the Far East becoming members of an emerging "Asian Community" and to debate its challenges and perspectives. Considering the variety and diversity of topics, the SRC decided to publish these proceedings separately according to their specific field.

This second volume, entitled "Chekhov and Sakhalin," focuses on the quite emblematic fact from the history of Russian Far East, i.e. Anton Chekhov's visit to Sakhalin Island in 1890. This unexpected adventure by 30-year-old writer and doctor is a kind of culturological enigma, which invites various interpretations.

For example, this is a case how an inhabitant of the center of a huge empire acquaints himself with the empire's front-periphery, which might be compared with André Gide's trip to Africa, also pursued at the end of 19th century (of course, we might also mention other *fin de siècle travelers*, such as Joseph Conrad and Pierre Loti). In this sense what interest us first is the historical contexts or background of the case: Chekhov's personal history up to the trip, the traffic and other conditions of Siberia and Far East at that time, general image of Asian Russia toward the Russian *fin de siècle*, and so on.

The consequences of this trip are also of great interest. Chekhov pursued detailed ethnological research of the inhabitants of Sakhalin

Island and left its result in the form of thousands of inquiry sheets. In spite of the Russian and Soviet scholars' great effort these materials have not been published and remained as blind spots for the world Chekhovians. Only recently we heard that the Museum Dedicated to Chekhov's Book *The Island Sakhalin* in Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk is going to publish them in book form on its own initiative. So we may expect the total assessment of this aspect of Chekhov's trip in quite near future.

The meaning of this trip for Chekhov's literature is another point. The main literary result of the trip is, of course, the unique work *The Island Sakhalin*, which has a rich history of analytical study. But as to the meaning of Sakhalin trip for Chekhov's creation as a whole, there seems to remain a lot to be examined.

Our symposium succeeded in inviting scholars from three countries, which have rich tradition of Chekhov studies.

Inga Tsupenkova (Russia) is the director of the Museum Dedicated to Chekhov's Book *The Island Sakhalin* in Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk. In her paper, entitled "Anton Chekhov in the Cultural Space of Russian Far East at the End of the Twentieth and the Beginning of the Twenty-First Centuries" Director Tsupenkova explains how the scholars of Russian Far East organized domestic as well as international Chekhov studies since the collapse of Soviet Union. On her another paper "Toward the Publication of the Materials from Chekhov's Sakhalin Census in 1890"<sup>1</sup> Director Tsupenkova offers a detailed explanation about the present condition of Chekhov's census materials and the prospects of their publication.

Mochizuki Tsuneko (Japan, Hokkaido University) is specialized in modern Russian and emigrant literature. Her paper, entitled "The

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1 This second paper was read at the time of the Annual Conference of the Japanese Association for the Study of Russian Language and Literature, which was held in the city of Wakkanai (Hokkaido) on October 2, 2004.

Historical Context of Chekhov's Trip," is focused on the mental, social and material backgrounds of the writer's trip. She also pays attention to the problem of how and to what extent Chekhov knew about or was interested in Japan.

Andrew Durkin (USA, Indiana University) is specialized in Slavic and comparative literature. In his paper "Transgression and Sakhalin: Dostoevskian Subtext in Chekhov's *Murder*," professor Durkin sheds new light on the only story that directly reflects Chekhov's experiences on Sakhalin (*Murder*) by disclosing the latent polemics on religious issue between Chekhov and Dostoevsky.

As a commentator we invited Kimura Takashi (Japan, Kyoto University), who is specialized in Russian literature and cultural intercourse in the Far East.

This "Chekhov session" was one of the commemorative events for the centennial anniversary of the writer's death, which were held in various places and styles in Japan throughout 2004. Its result once again stimulated us to regard Russian Far East as a space for encounter and mutual discovery of various peoples and cultures.

We hope this booklet will arouse the same effect in each reader and hence we will really appreciate any comments from our readers.

Mochizuki Tetsuo  
Editor  
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